



Winning Futures Program Outcomes

Winning Futures' curriculum and structure were initially designed in 1994 by business leaders, educators, parents, and students to address the skills students need to succeed in the world of work. This evidenced-based model has been implemented into 32 schools and non-profit agencies over the last 15 years as a prevention and intervention program. Winning Futures builds targeted skills in students through mentoring and workshops. The curriculum focuses on character value identification, personal assessments, academic goal setting and support, career exploration and planning, job readiness skills, and short- and long-term goal setting. This is achieved through written activities in the Winning Futures workbooks, along with group discussions and hands-on activities facilitated by a mentor.

In 2007, Saginaw Valley State University created customized pre- and post-assessment tools for mentors, students, and teachers based upon the program curriculum and related goals. The evaluation utilized a multi-method research design incorporating standardized assessment scales, new self-administered surveys, in-person interviews and secondary school data. Each topic has a series of four to six scenario type questions for students to answer on how they react through a scaled response.

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Student Assessments

Pre- and post-assessments have been analyzed for students who completed the year-long program. A comparison group of students was also utilized. This has shown **statistically significant** student improvements in: honesty, respect, citizenship, motivation, and self-esteem. Improvements in fairness, study habits, and work habits were also found.

Winning Futures' curriculum is successfully implemented in schools with high dropout rates. In a recent long-term study of program graduates, over 90% continued their education after high school. This is quite the achievement since many youth in the program are not on track to graduate or have no intention of completing post-secondary schools. This year, 83% of students increased an academic grade through the six-week goal setting process and 84% decided to attend a higher level of education than originally planned (99.3% now want to continue schooling past high school).

Mentor Assessments

Mentors reported that youth improved in a majority of the areas.

- Improved their organizational skills
- Taken a more positive attitude towards school
- Came to school well-prepared
- Improved their study skills
- The initiative to accomplish their academic goals.
- Feel that there are adults who care about him/her
- Feel that there are people who will help him/her
- Thinks it's important to help others
- Have good communication skills
- Think he or she is a good person

Mentors also saw a clear improvement in the future plans of their mentees which included increases in the scores in the following categories: positive future outlook, pursuit of higher education, direction in career path, and ability to achieve career success.

Commenting on the best part of being a mentor, one person stated, "The fact that I can make a difference in someone's life. I was at first skeptical as to whether I [could] do this but after reading each of my mentees letters, it is a great feeling that I can make a positive role in someone's life."

Teacher Assessments

In this study, teachers completed surveys online both before the students began and after the students finished the Winning Futures program. The teachers were asked thirty-eight questions about each student with multiple-choice responses. The survey included such statements as, “My student is prepared to overcome future obstacles,” and “My student has good communication skills.”

Teachers had scores in the following categories that changed in a **statistically significant manner**.

- Has positive attitude toward school
- Believes he or she is a leader
- Is self-reliant
- Is motivated
- Thinks it’s important to help others
- Is honest
- Takes initiative when things need to be done
- Is willing to compromise with peers
- Is able to express his or her feelings
- Has good communication skills
- Gets along well with others
- Thinks he or she is a good person

Overall, the views of the teachers responded more positively in all thirty-seven questions between the pre- and post-mentoring evaluations. The additional areas of improvement are:

- Is organized
- Has high self-esteem
- Has adequate study skills
- Feels sure of him- or herself
- Has adequate goal setting skills
- Has reasonable attendance at school
- Has a positive view of his or her future
- Is prepared to overcome future obstacles
- Has adequate expectations of him/herself
- Feels he or she has adequate future options
- Is near their potential achievement for grades and test scores
- Comes to school well prepared (such as having homework done)
- Has good classroom behavior (i.e., paying attention, not disruptive)
- Feels that there are adults who care
- Feels that there are people who will help
- Feels others see him/her as responsible
- Is well equipped to resist using alcohol and other drugs
- Has the skills required to succeed at a career

According to the views of the teachers of the students involved in Winning Futures, this program is very effective and brings strong and meaningful change in the students involved in it (72.3% saw benefit for the mentee). One teacher said, “The fact that he is graduating is a big success. Winning Futures and his mentor played a big role in his ability to remain focused and on track to graduate.” By and large, teachers thought highly of the program with 95.7% rating the program as “excellent.”

Conclusion

It is apparent from the diverse assessment methods that youth were gaining skills valuable to their future. These areas included the mentee’s ability to set realistic goals, adequate goal-setting skills, and firm direction in their career path. These changes are related to the changes mentors witnessed in how the youth felt about their future. Mentees were observed as having a more positive future of themselves. In addition, mentees were thought to feel that they could overcome future obstacles, that they had adequate future options, and adequate expectations of him/herself. Not only do the youth appear to feel more confident about themselves and their future, but they are also feeling that others think that they are responsible enough to achieve those goals and would have the initiative to pursue them.

Winning Futures is extremely organized program. The staff is all well trained and very motivated to continue to improve their program. In addition, the program staff strives to use programming that is standardized and based on research of best practices. Overall, Winning Futures has become a model program and one that has demonstrated much success. School-based mentoring programs do not often see the success that Winning Futures is demonstrating in some key areas. There is every reason to believe that they will continue to grow in their excellence of service to the community.

Contact: www.WinningFutures.org or 586.294.8449